



Publicness of Void
"Reforming-Representing A Public Library"

ARCH 503 Core Design Studio
Rice University School of Architecture, 2011

II. Publicness of Void

Subject: "Re-Forming & Representing A Public Library" - Public As A Transparent Locus,
ARCH 503 Core Design Studio, Rice University School of Architecture, 2011

Location: Houston, Texas, United States

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As both a secure repository of books and a symbolic civic building, a public library must negotiate the spatial dichotomy between storage and display. Such "display" not only refers to the display of information and knowledge, it concerns more about "publicness" as an open platform for people to get involved and to react within.

Through a strategy of "synthesis" the library is formed by a "void" system, which is not only a space condition, but more like a stimulator to organize spaces on both section and plan levels within a public institution. Simultaneously, the "void" also served as an instrument to examine the potential possibility of connection in-between specific programs, different languages and some very important natural elements such as light.

Once light plays the very essential part in the building, information flows, people's activities even the book stacks themselves would become contents of this "public image", which renders the public space as a transparent locus and finally redefine people's perception of knowledge and democracy.

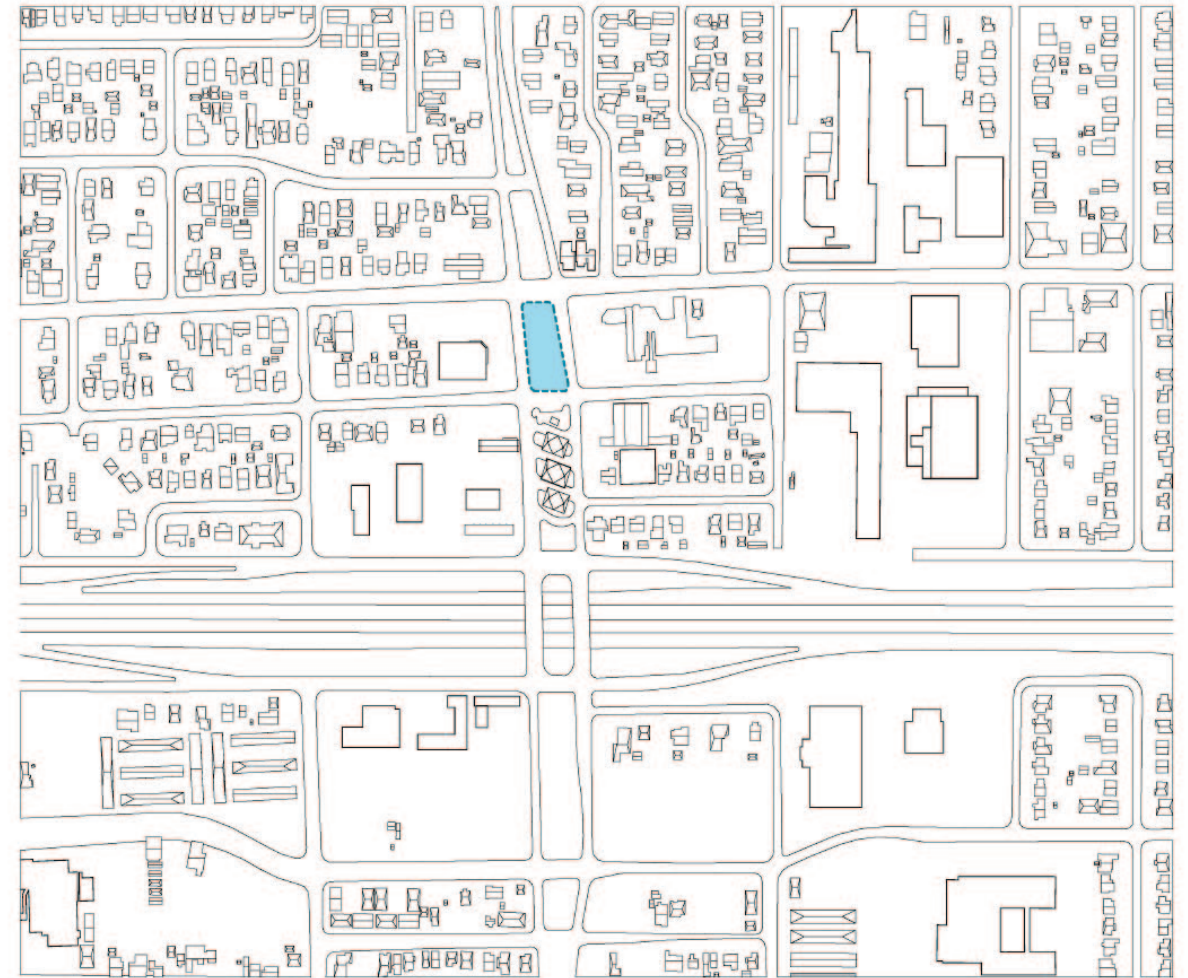
Ultimately, the "voids" would create an urban condition that is a synthesis between invisible publicness and visible programs, activities and natural elements.



Urban Scale Site Map

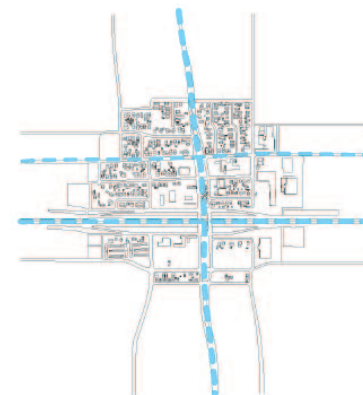
Site Mapping

An "ISLAND" urban condition, located north-east of downtown Houston, Texas. The Island site sits on a rift between a primarily Hispanic and African American Neighborhood. In close proximity to a Bus Station and and Highway 10, the library could service both local and larger needs. Site Dimensions: Approx. 70' x 185' = 13,000 sf.

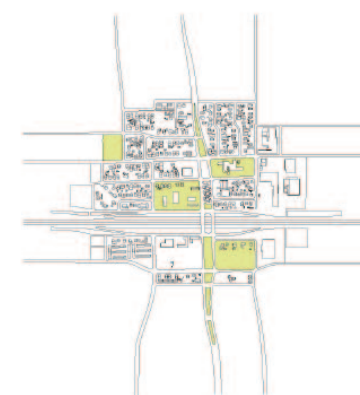


Site Mapping (1/128"=1'-0")

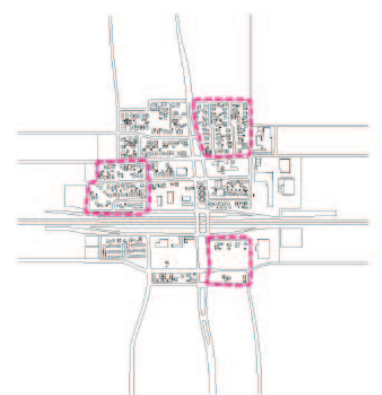
Considering the specificity and complexity of site, an overall analysis (transportation, open space and demographic) based on very essential elements of the urban environment is necessary to take the whole design process into a further level.



Major Transportation Access



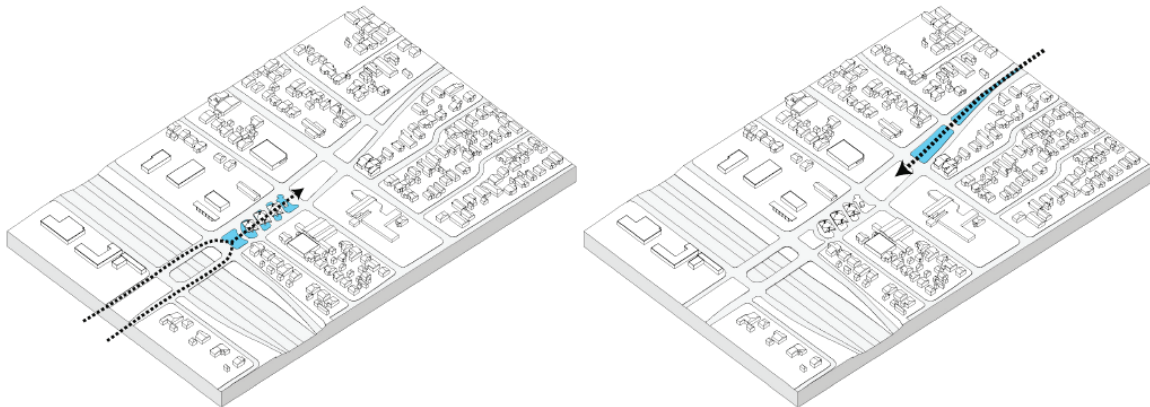
Open Space Condition



Hispanic Neighborhood

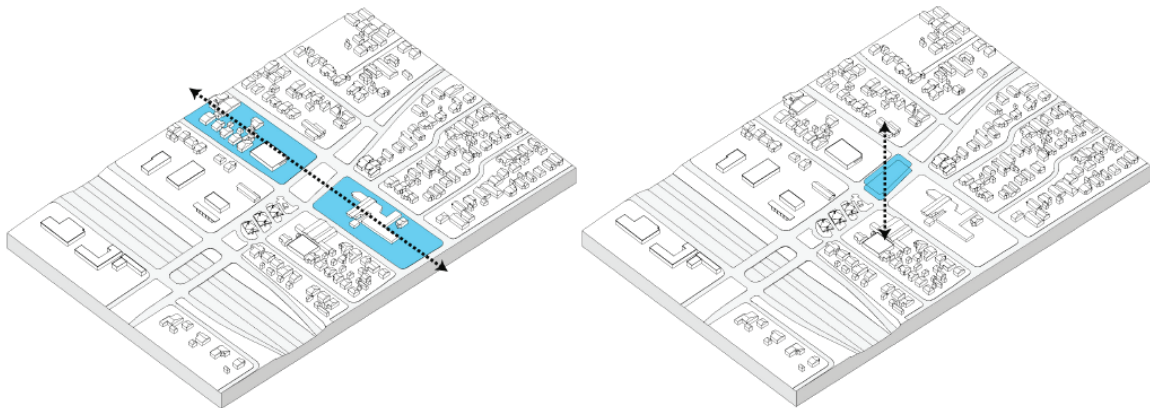
Zoomed-In Links

After the large scale region analysis, a zoomed-in scale site which contains major surrounding elements and various urban functions has clearly showed the potential links, circulation and restriction in between site itself and the urban environment.



Bus Station and Potential Flow of People

Potential Green Area Extension

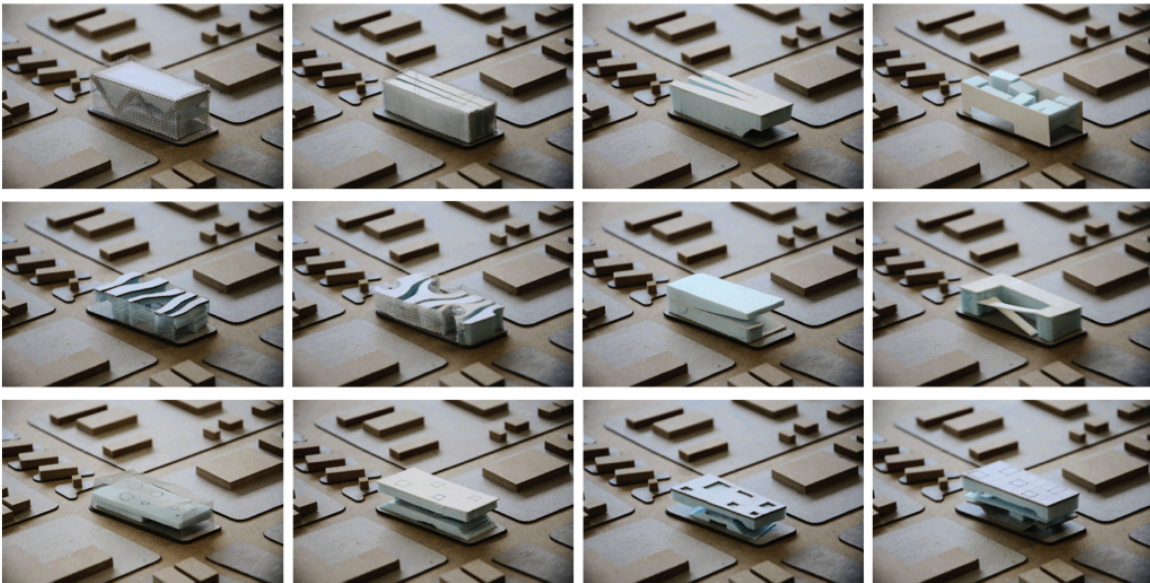


Urban Public Axes

Building Height Restriction

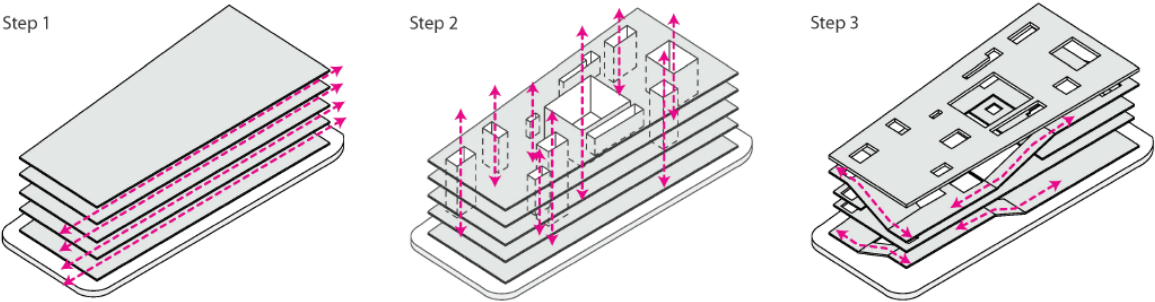
Program Strategy Research

Program strategy study models with different stress of urban links (scale: 1/64"=1'-0").

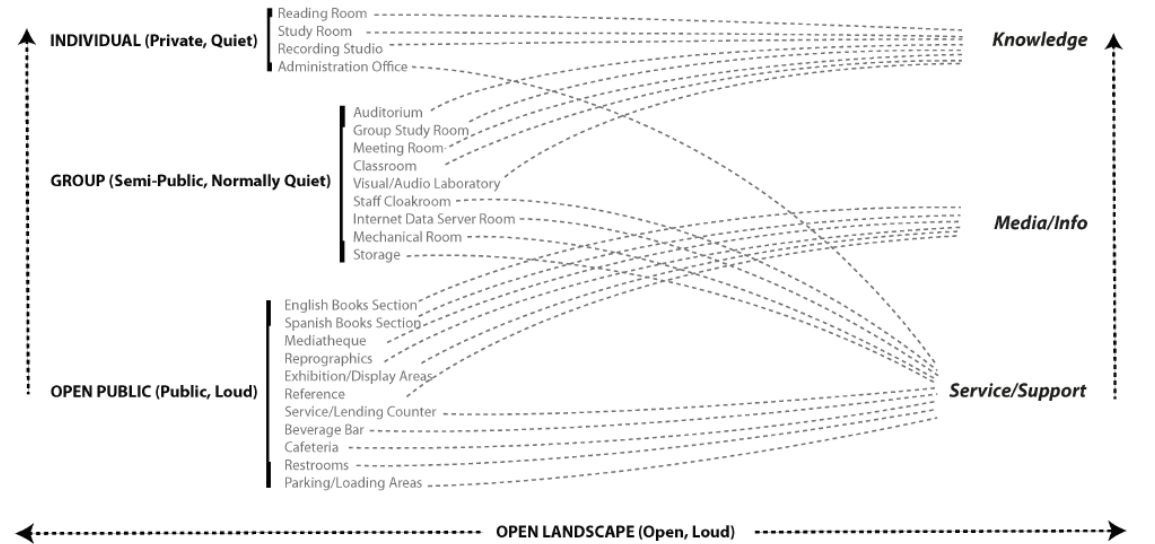


Forming A "VOID" System

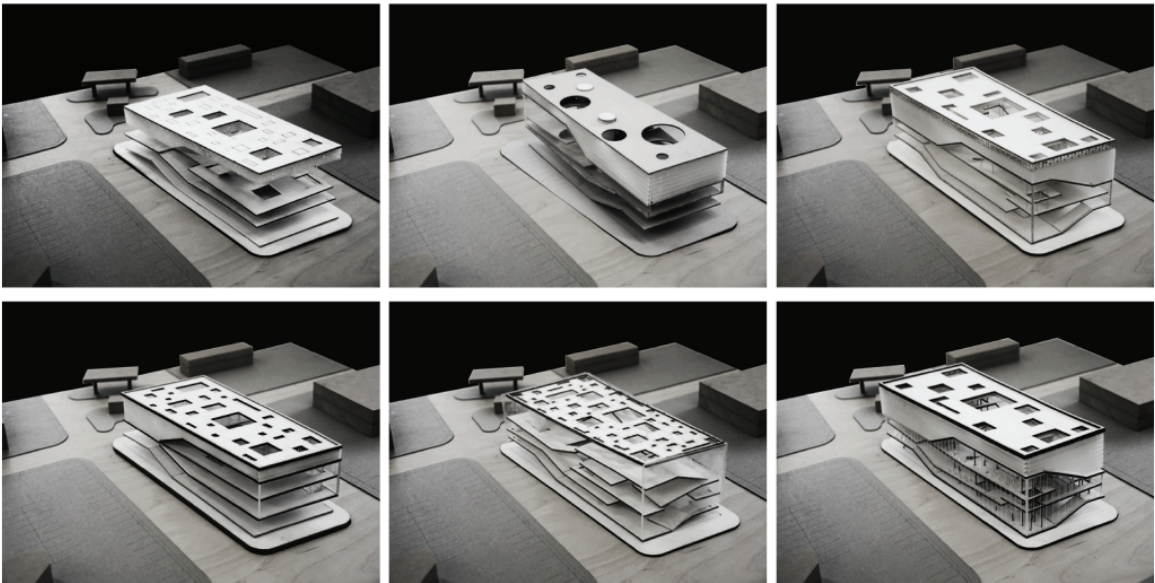
Three major steps are took into consideration to form the "void" system:
1. layer the basic programs by their spatial properties; 2. use "void" to organize space and programs on both section and plan levels; 3. blur the space of "void " and "solid".



Layer all the programs from public to individual and re-group them into the three main courses of library: knowledge, media and service.

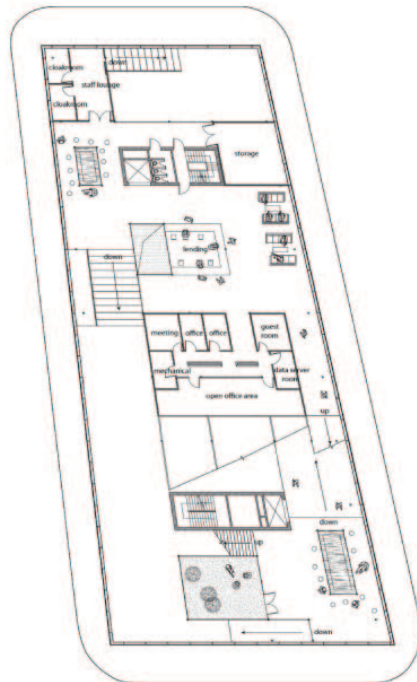


"Void" typology study models with different possibilities of space and program organization (scale: 1/16"=1'-0").

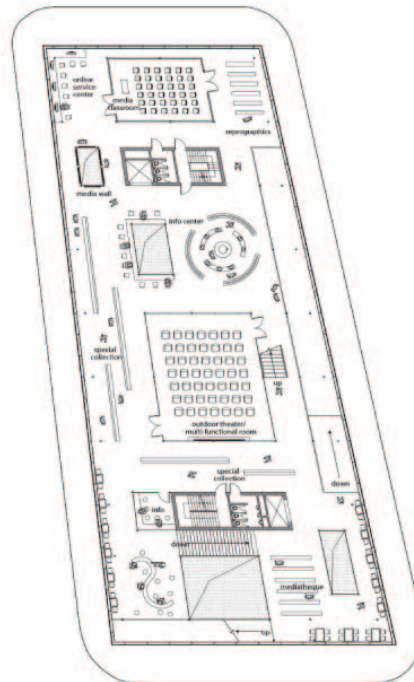




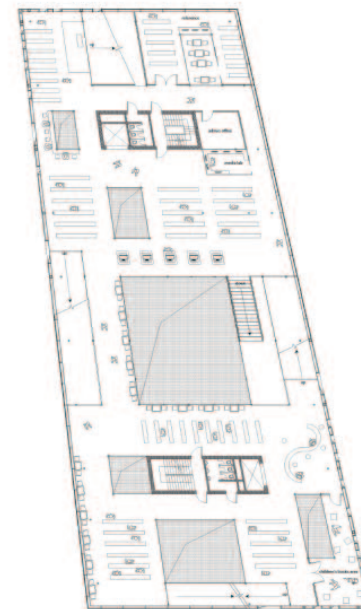
Ground Floor Plan



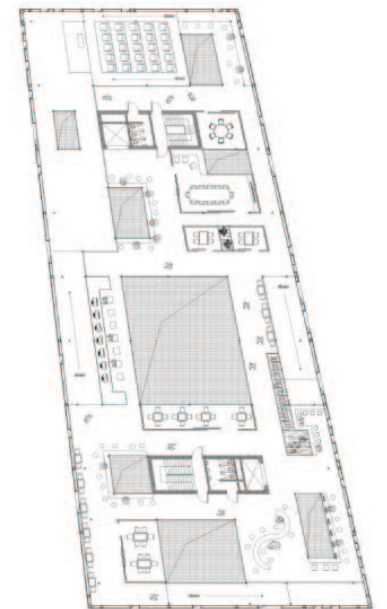
1st Floor Plan



2nd Floor Plan



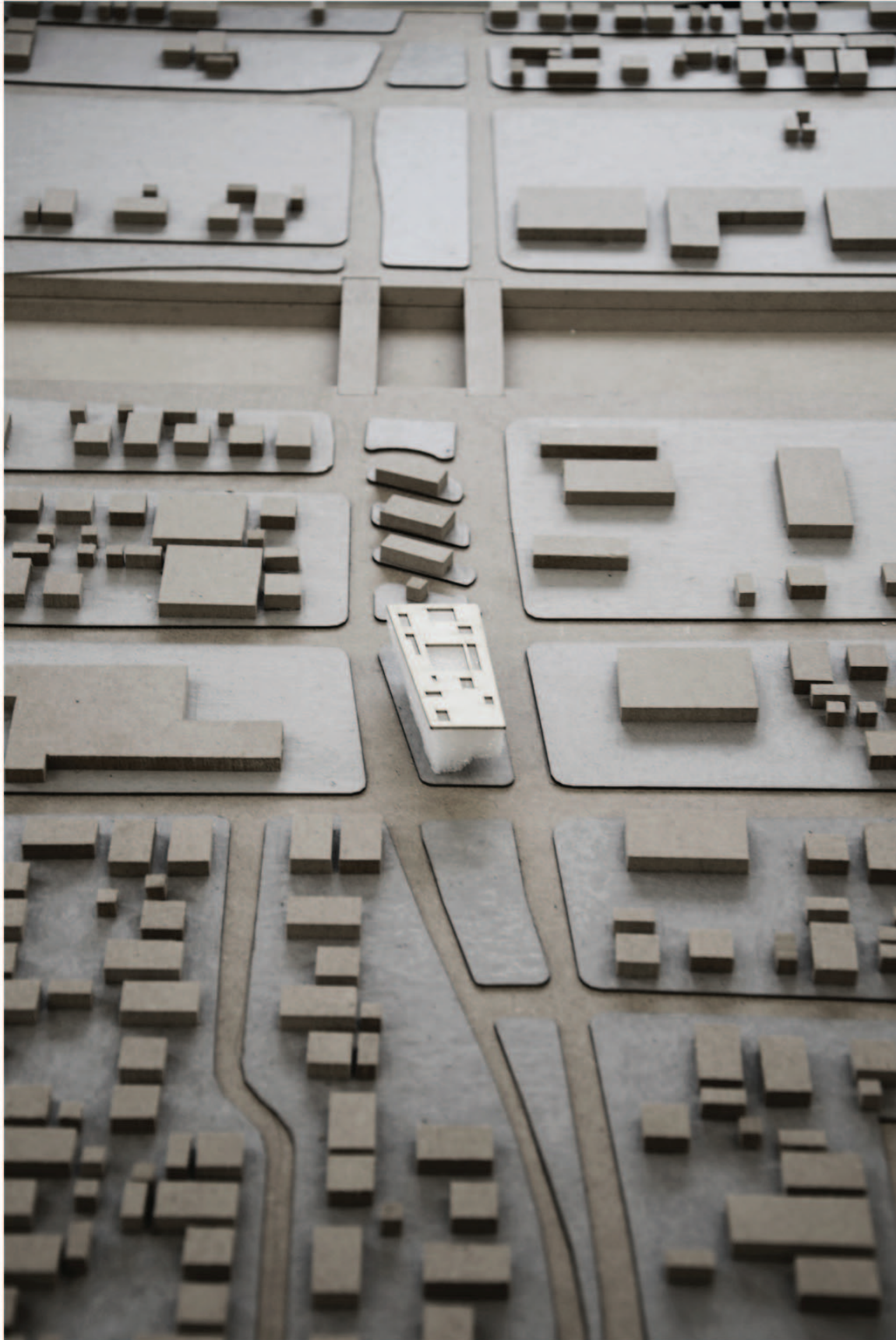
3rd Floor Plan



4th Floor Plan

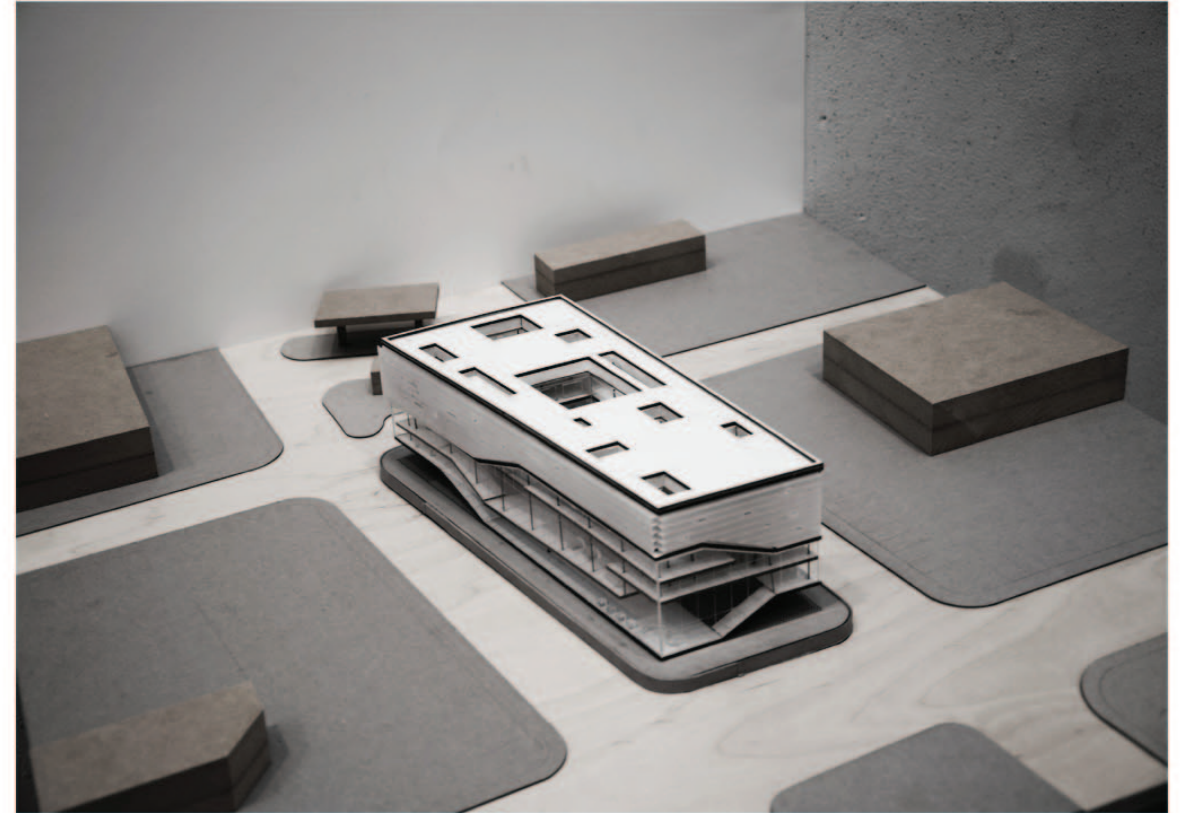
Site Scale Concept Model

The concept model shows the essential idea of urban gesture possessed by project and its connection to the existing context (scale: 1/64"=1'-0").



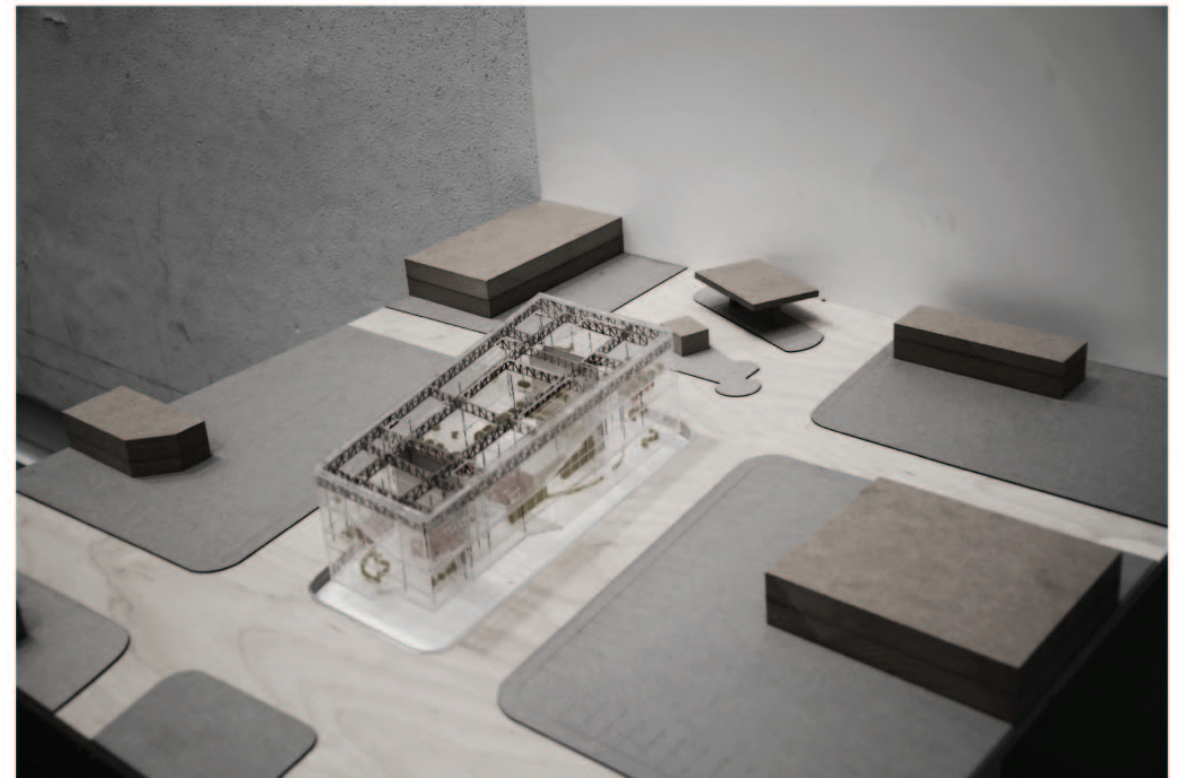
Architectural Model

The architectural model serves to demonstrate the idea of program organization, structure and envelope system in a more detailed level (scale: 1/16"=1'-0").



Plexiglass Model

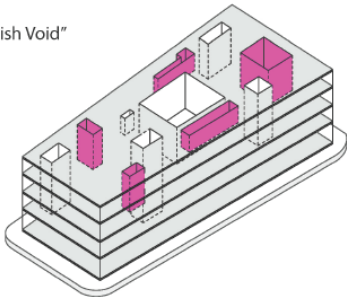
The plexiglass model is basically built for the clear argument of relations between knowledge, media and service (scale: 1/16"=1'-0").



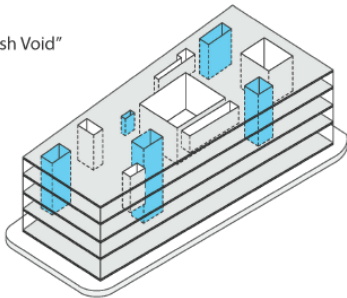
Void As Indicator and Stimulator

The proposed "void" system works as stimulator on the section level to contain and create new possibilities by programmatic and visual connections on various heights, simultaneously, it also serves as indicator on the plan level in the means of language group distribution and organization.

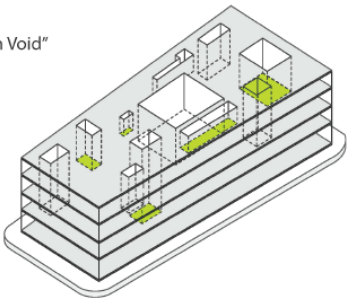
1. "Spanish Void"



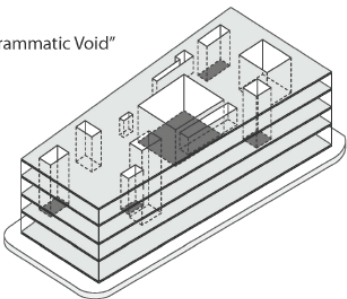
2. "English Void"



3. "Open Void"



4. "Programmatic Void"



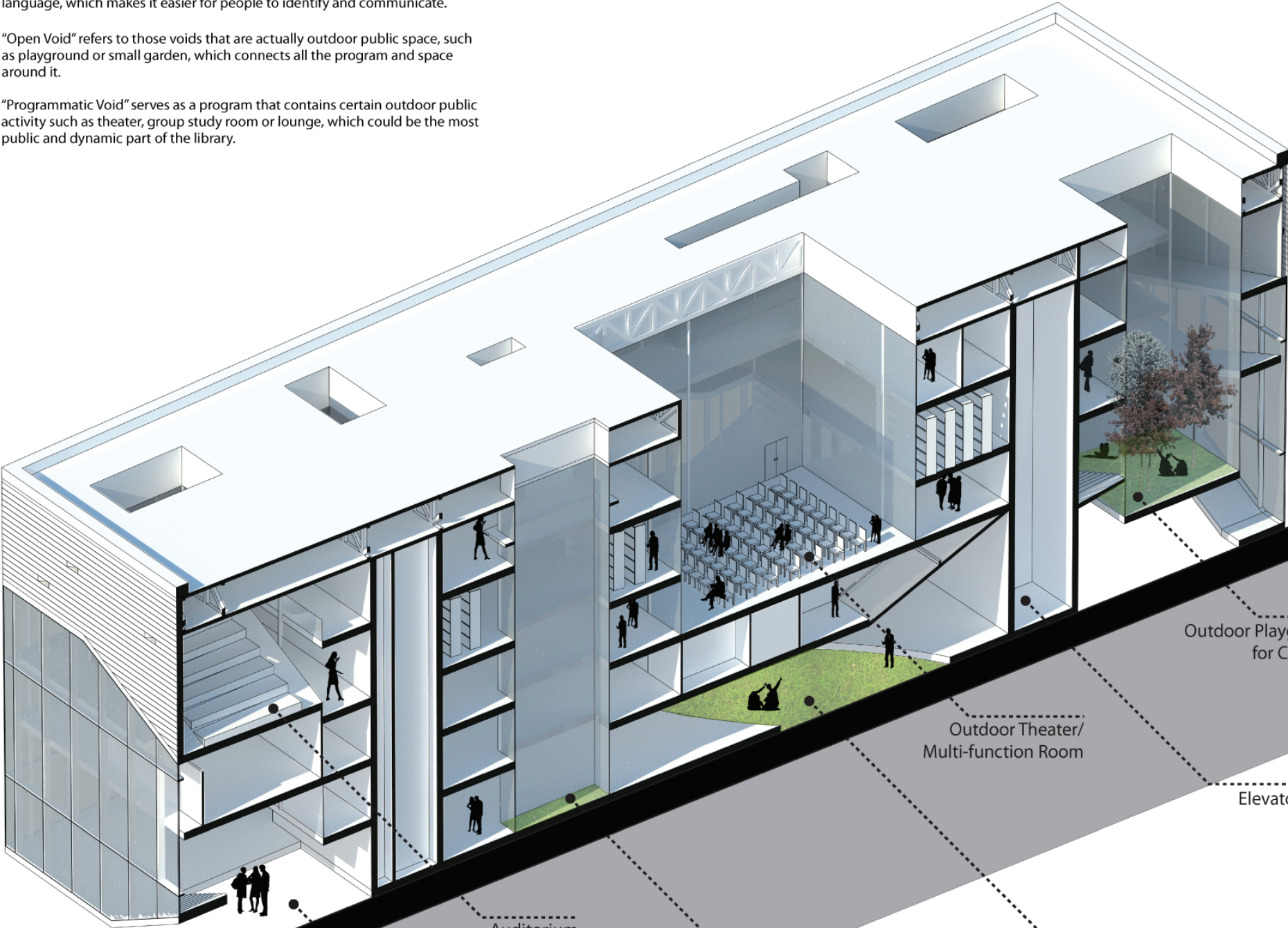
"Spanish/English Void" means a way to organize different language groups and their activities, everything happens or relates to the void is about that specific language, which makes it easier for people to identify and communicate.

"Open Void" refers to those voids that are actually outdoor public space, such as playground or small garden, which connects all the program and space around it.

"Programmatic Void" serves as a program that contains certain outdoor public activity such as theater, group study room or lounge, which could be the most public and dynamic part of the library.

Sectional Perspective (NTS)

The sectional perspective on right shows clearly how the void works on section and its relation to structure/envelope as a whole.



Auditorium

Main Entrance/Open Plaza

Outdoor Lounge

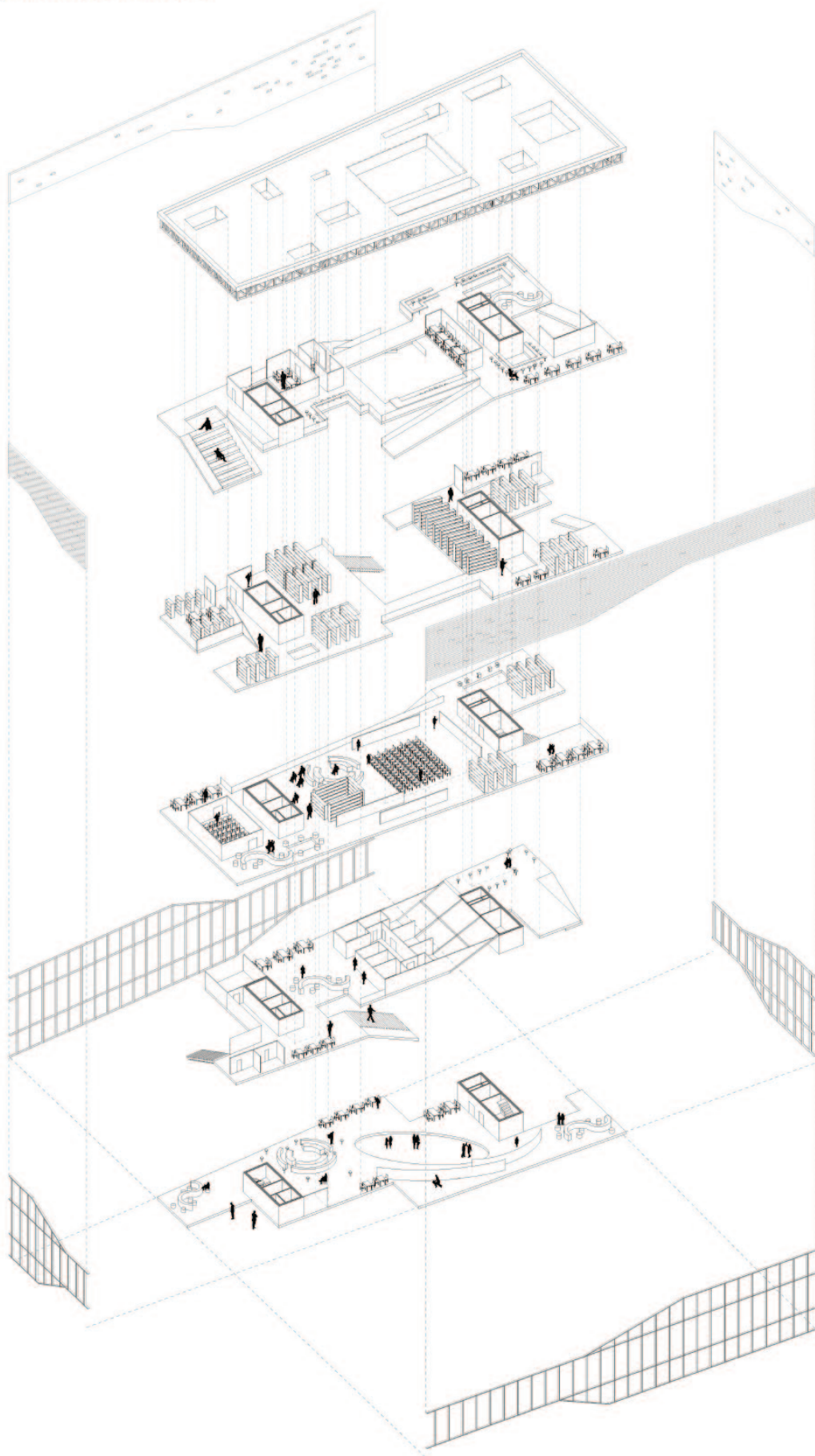
Outdoor Theater/
Multi-function Room

Elevator Core

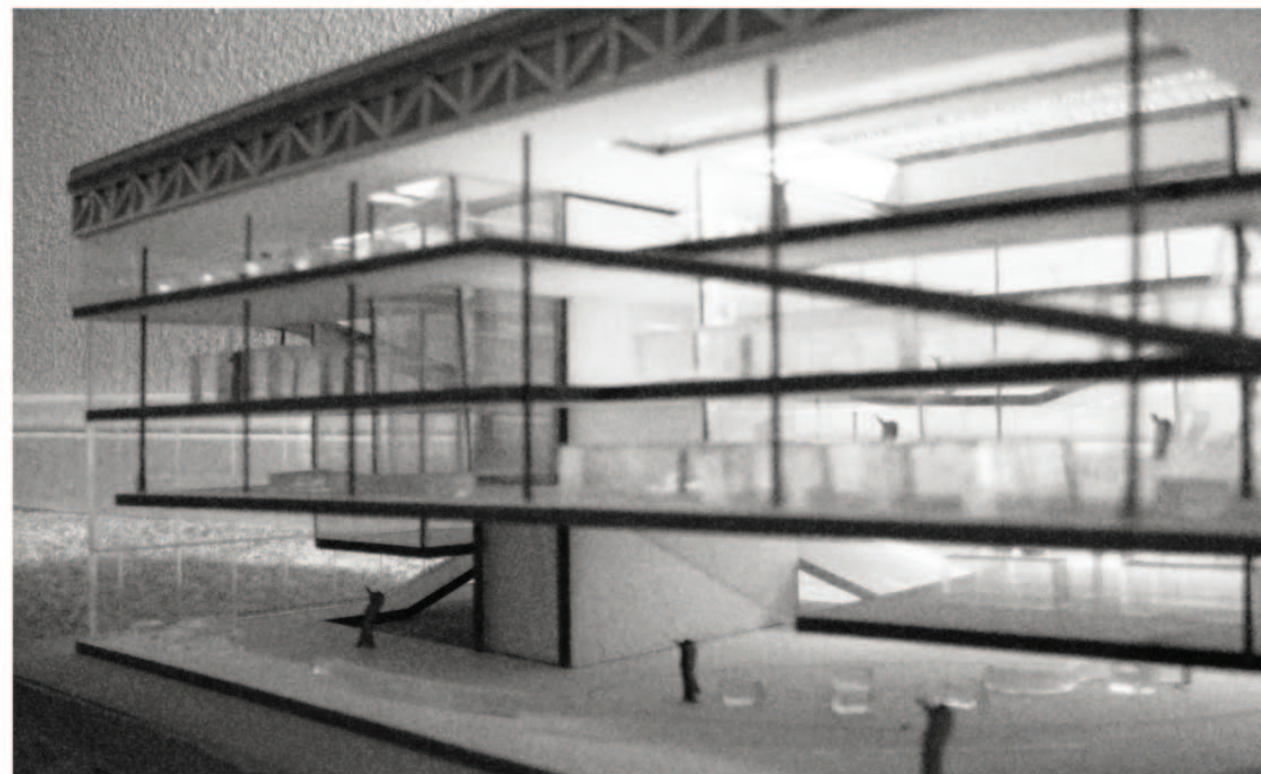
Indoor Leisure Garden

Outdoor Playground
for Children

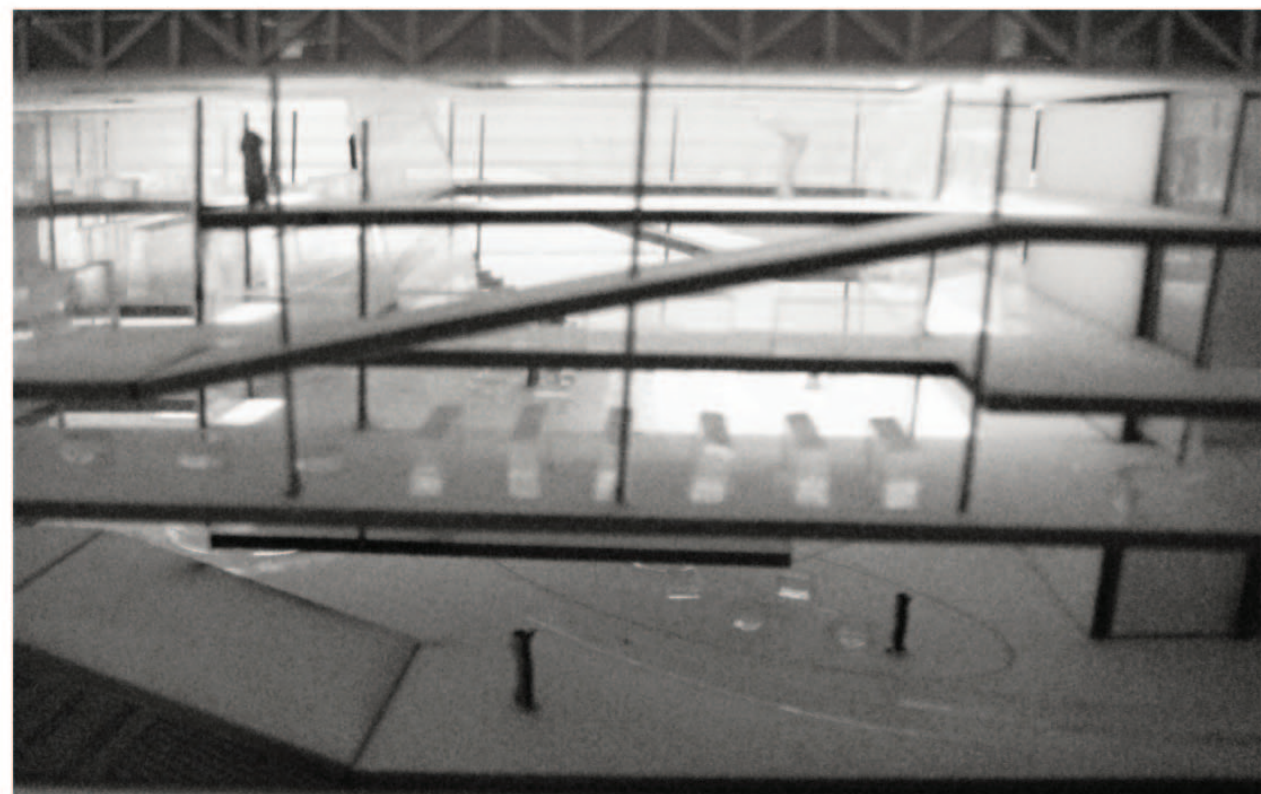
Programmatic Axonometric



As it comes to the upper part of the building, "void" is more like a "light well" which provides a bright place for reading (model scale: 1/16"=1'-0").



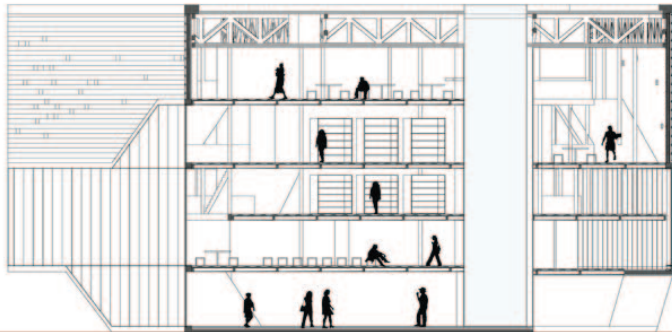
The situation is quite different in the lower part, since the "void" has transformed to organize program and activity (model scale: 1/16"=1'-0").



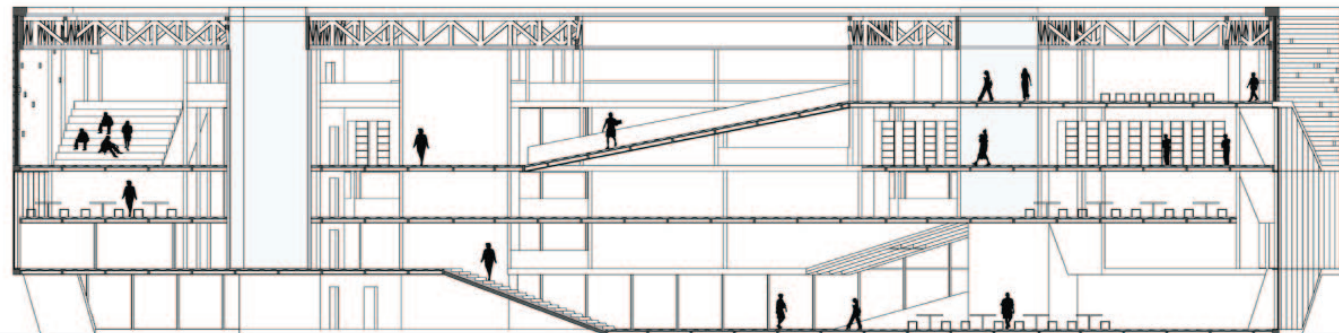
"Light Well" not only brings more natural light for people's reading, more significantly, it has created a public image of "Publicness of Void" which will finally redefine people's perception of knowledge and democracy.



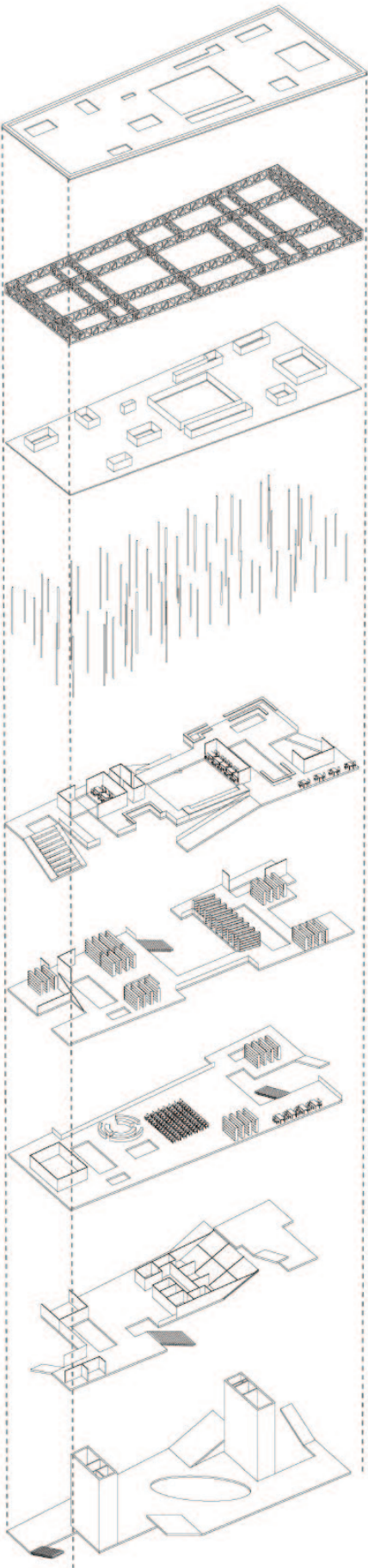
"Light Well" view on the top floor.



Section A-A



Section B-B



Structure System

Truss Hanging System

Suspension Steel Slab System

Supporting System Cores

Envelope System - Wall Section (NTS)

The envelope of a building also speaks for its program organizations. The program conception has determined that the experience on upper level is different from the lower one. A facade system consists of two types of materials is proposed to create different kinds of enclosing space. The zinc panel system helps people focus more on the "light well" in the upper part, and the transparent glass curtain wall gives people more bright visions around the site. It not only benefits people around to read the building, but also shapes a new public image.

